

**FOUR YEARS IN A RED HELL**

**Fr. Rigney Hears Curt Phrase: 'You Are Released...'**

By The Very Rev. Harold W. Rigney, S.V.D. Divine Word Missionary

Scratching off another day on my homemade prison calendar, I muttered:

"Sunday, September 11."

It was a forbidding day, cloudy and very chilly, and when the assistant director of the Tsao Lan Tzu prison came into my cell after breakfast, I did not expect him to do anything that would lift my spirits.

I could hardly grasp what he said in Chinese, but as he spoke he touched my summer clothing. I had the impression that he wanted me to put on winter garb. I was right. But when he told me to put on my heavy clothes and pack my belongings, I was perplexed.

Where now? I asked as another officer drove me in a jeep beyond the Tien Au Men (Gate of Heavenly Peace), and stopped at a sinister building with barred windows.

Led into an Empty Room

Another prison, I thought pessimistically as I was led into an empty room with a desk. Then I observed that most of the rooms above the basement were gridded.

A moment later, a guard led me to a courtroom. The judge was a gray-haired man and the woman was the one who had been my interpreter in previous court hearings was seated at his left. I stood at attention with my hands behind my back.

"What is your name?" he asked. "Rui Ko Ni (Rigney)," I replied.

"Where do you live?" "Li Kwang Ch'iao Nan Chieh, No. 1" (my quarters in Peiping)," I said.

Document Read By Judge

Then the judge read from a document on his desk. Briefly, it said in effect that I had worked diligently in the prison factory, obeyed the prison regulations, recognizing my "crimes" against the Chinese "People's" democracy and had reformed myself by my labor.

Because of this good conduct, the judge read on, the Supreme Military Court had reviewed my case.

He looked up and concluded with a curt phrase in Chinese. The interpreter turned to me and translated:

"You are released."

I was still for a moment, letting the impact sink in. Was it possible that I heard him correctly? Were my ears deceiving me? Could it be that the 50 heart-breaking, tortured months I had spent in Communist China's prisons had finally come to an end, that years of prayer had been heard, that wistful hopes had been realized?

I kept my wild excitement under leash and said quietly to the judge:

"Thank you."

He dismissed me with a nod and I floated out of the building where the guard in the jeep drove out of the court grounds. I was free, thanks be to God.

Another Judge Explains

We returned to Tsao Lan Tzu, where another Communist judge, flanked by a male interpreter, elucidated on my release, saying that I had been freed because of my good work record and because of the "leniency" of the People's government. Then he added:

"There has been a conference at Geneva, Switzerland, on an ambassadorial level, between the ambassadors of People's China and the U.S. government. An agreement has been reached at this parley to exchange civilian citizens and the British have agreed to serve as intermediaries."

Now I understood why the prison officials had been treating me with such rare courtesy in recent days.

Agrees To Delay

When the judge asked me what I planned to do next, I said I wanted to have my teeth looked after.

"Could you postpone your dental work for two or three days?" he asked again.

I assented. Having suffered from perpetually aching teeth for the last three and a half years and having been callously refused dental care during all that time, a wait of two or three days more would be a small matter.

The reason for the request, the judge explained, was because the "People's" government wanted to expedite my departure from their country.

Tastes Eggs, Bread

At noon, I had a delightful tiffin of scrambled eggs and man tou (white bread, steamed in the Chinese style) and at 4 o'clock the woman interpreter told me to pack my belongings. Some minutes later, two guards took me to a hotel, where I had a

bath — a real bath! — a good Western meal and the opportunity to pray divine office for the first time since my arrest on July 25, 1951.

At 9:30 the next night, the two guards drove me to Peiping's main railroad station and we left that city for a journey south. During the trip, in a luxurious first-class compartment, I was accompanied by the guards.

This is the 14th installment in the gripping story of the 50 months spent in Communist prisons in China by the Very Rev. Harold W. Rigney, S.V.D. His story appears in the Courier Journal through courtesy of the Chicago Sun-Times.

which I shall call Junior and Senior. Junior was making a last desperate bid to convince me that communism offered me a superior way of life to capitalism and that I should become a Communist.

Parries His Arguments

I parried his awkward argument with direct statements: I would never become a Communist because as a Christian I could not accept dialectical materialism.

After several days of earnest proselytizing, Junior gave up. "Rigney, you're hopeless," he said. "You'll never be a Communist."

"Indeed, I will never be a Marxist Communist," I replied. "But there is one point on which we agree and that is peace?"

"Yes," I replied. "I stand for peace, the peace of Christ."

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NEXT WEEK: A priest says farewell to the land of hollow justice and degraded men.



**Navy Men Pray Rosary On High Seas**

In the absence of a chaplain, servicemen aboard the destroyer USS Gregory pray the rosary, led by Lieutenant (j.g.) Peter B. Fielder, Jr., of San Diego, extreme right. The destroyer is en route with three other ships on a goodwill cruise to Sydney, Australia. (NC Photo)

**'Everybody Does It' Gets Prelate's Rap**

Cleveland — (NC) — A philosophy of life based on acceptance of whatever happens to be popular at the time "clips the brilliance of youth, destroys genius and impedes holiness," some 300 diocesan youth leaders were counseled here.

Thinking based on the slogan that "if everybody is doing it, it must be okay" is supported by today's apparent satisfaction with mediocrity, Auxiliary Bishop John J. Krol of Cleveland said in the sermon at a Mass he offered opening the fifth annual convention of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Youth.

Bishop Krol told the congregation in St. John's Cathedral that standards dictated by popular acceptance have been substituted for standards established by God.

He cited a conference of religious leaders which in 1910 condemned contraception, but in 1930 issued a statement on the same subject saying it was "a matter of individual conscience."

HE SAID reports, such as that released by Dr. Kinsey are an "ingenious device" for setting up a pattern of accepted behavior based on the "everybody is doing it" premise.

In resolutions, the diocesan council noted an increase in the showing of indecent movies in Ohio and called for legislation to curb it. The state is at present without film censorship following a court ruling which crippled the old regulations.

**Flying Priest Gives Pilot School**

Wonn, Germany — (RNS) — Father Paul Schulte, German "flying priest" who is now an American citizen, formally turned over to the North Rhine-Westphalia government a training school for pilots he inaugurated at Hangelar near here last year.

Facilities at the school, where 150 young men have already obtained pilot's certificates, includes seven planes.

Father Schulte, who is 60 and flew a plane during World War I while a missionary in Africa, announced he is planning to retire from aviation and work exclusively for Diaspora MIRA, of which he is general secretary.

He founded this organization in 1949 to "motorize" priests administering to Catholics living in non-Catholic areas. It is a branch of the St. Boniface Association which is devoted to strengthening Catholicism in areas where Catholics are in a minority.

**Priest Commander Lauds Sailors**

New Orleans — (NC) — The good influence of Catholic sailors among their mates was praised by Father Cmdr. Jeremiah F. Gearan, chaplain of the Eighth Naval district.

Father Gearan made the remark in a sermon in St. Patrick's church during the annual Apostleship of the Sea Sunday observance here.

Auxiliary Bishop L. Abel Callouet of New Orleans, episcopal moderator of the Apostleship of the Sea, offered a Solemn Mass which was followed by an open house held at the Catholic Maritime Club.

Pray The Rosary

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